

TOP WINNING PERCENTAGES IN NATIONAL HISTORY

While the Reds have posted the highest winning percentage in the nation over the past 25 years (88.3%), and won 91% (232-23-1) of all games (including postseason) over the past 10 years, the early years of Coach Danley's career (beginning in 1972) were much more average as they took over a team that had gone a total of 12-29 over its previous 4 seasons, including a 4-11 mark in 1971. The Reds would win just 57.5% of their games (69-51) over the coach's first 7 years (in comparison, the Reds have lost just 38 games over the past 18 years).

Despite these losses in the 1970's, the Reds still have the 3rd best high school winning percentage for any period under one coach in national history (with a minimum of 600 wins).

There are only 8 baseball programs in national history that have posted a winning percentage of 82% or above during a longtime coach's tenure. No NCAA or NAIA college coach (with a minimum of 500 wins) at any level has reached 82%, and no Major League manager even reaches 62%. Only three junior college programs—Seminole State (84.0%), San Jacinto College-North (83.4%) and Middle Georgia College (83.1%)—have reached 82% under any longtime coach.

The six high schools to have ever reached this mark are:

<u>High School</u>	<u>Mascot</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Win %</u>
Bancroft St. John's	Johnnies	IA	1935-1981	86.1%
Madison Central	Indians	KY	1959-1993	85.8%
Eaton	Fightin' Reds	CO	1972-2015	83.1%
Asher	Indians	OK	1960-1998	83.1%
LaPorte	Slicers	IN	1960-1998	82.1%



Select newspaper articles about the winningest high school teams in history are on the following pages.

Note: The Reds finished less than one game ahead of Asher, with a winning pct. of 83.128%, while Asher was 83.112%; had the Reds finished with one fewer win, the Reds' winning percentage would have dropped to 4th place all-time at 83.110%

sources: 2015 NFHS national record book, NCAA, NAIA and NJCAA official record books.



Bancroft St. John's High School, Bancroft, Iowa

Head Coach (from 1935 to 1981) Vince Meyer

Bottom of the seventh. Two outs. Two strikes. Another strike and Vince Meyer, known as Mr. Meyer to the legion of Bancroft St. John youngsters he coached, would have his coveted state high school summer baseball title. "At that point, I asked God for one more strike," Meyer recalled later. "He said, 'Vince, I've been giving you strikes for 46 years.'" History can be cruel, even to legends. It was in Marshalltown, on that August day in 1980, when temperatures reached 100 but the third strike never came. Kee High School of Lansing tied the score in the seventh inning and won the state Class 1-A title, 4-3, in 13 innings.

The innocence of youth can heal heartbreak in a hurry. But a dozen years after the loss, it remains a pesky reminder of what could have been. "Other than family members dying, that is probably the hardest thing I've ever gone through," said Mark Wesselman, who was on the field that day. Why does it still hurt? It goes deeper than missing out on a state title. It hurts because Mark Wesselman and the hundreds of others who donned St. John uniforms thought the world of Vince Meyer. It was that unwavering respect for Mr. Meyer that makes the outcome of that game so hard to accept.

"He taught me how to be a man," Wesselman said. "He Meyer Unforgettable taught us how to win gracefully and lose gracefully. I couldn't even imagine playing for someone else."

Meyer died of a heart condition on Oct. 22, 1981, less than three months after retiring. He was 69 years old. Meyer was sidelined for six weeks in 1973 because of a heart attack, and he battled poor health for the rest of his life. His great love of teaching youngsters the game of baseball enabled him to live above his handicap. "I tell you, he was sick with that heart condition for years and years," Meyer's wife, Mary, said. "Through all the pain, day or night, when he got out on that field he felt good. He felt his very best when he was out there working with the boys." Meyer's teams finished as runners-up in the summer tournament four times -- in 1947, 1957, 1976 and 1980. The Johnnies appeared in 32 state tournaments under Meyer, winning six fall titles. His teams won 1,105 baseball games from the time he took the job, in 1935, until he retired. That number would have been greater had he not served a stint in the Army from 1942 to 1946.

"Everyone gets so tied up in records," Meyer once said. "I'm more interested in today's game than any game we've played. And tomorrow, I'll be more interested in tomorrow's game." Tomorrow, always tomorrow. That's what kept Meyer in coaching when his heart was telling him to step aside.

"For the last few years, I've been saying this will be my final year," Meyer said in 1978. "But then I see the kids we have coming up and I look at them and say, 'Oh, maybe, just one more year.'" Finally, in April 1981, Meyer announced that he would retire at the end of the summer season. "I don't want to quit," Meyer said then. "I'd stay until I was 100 years old if I had a good heart."

Meyer's success never escaped his peers. In 1987 he was the first baseball coach inducted into the National Federation of State High School Associations Hall of Fame. He was also enshrined into the Iowa Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1969 and was presented the prestigious Lyle T. Quinn award by the Iowa High School Athletic Association in 1976. Still, Meyer was a humble man when discussing his success. "My biography isn't very interesting," Meyer said four months before he passed away. "He was born. He was married. He had children. He had baseball. And he died."

Meyer also ran a youth baseball league that served as a feeder system for his high school program. "He started those kids in the summer program when they could carry a baseball glove and stay out of the line of fire," Mary Meyer said. That feeder system produced a cast of well-drilled youngsters, numerous all-stars, even a major-league infielder named Denis Menke. Now a coach with Houston, Menke played 13 seasons with Milwaukee, Atlanta, Houston and Cincinnati. He twice made the All-Star team.

Meyer succeeded with a double-edged approach -- tough enough to make a point, but fair enough to earn respect. "As long as you play as well as you're capable of, no one can ever ask for more than that," Meyer professed. "Of course, I'd rather win. I don't want to get anyone confused about that. It's important to win, but it's no disgrace to lose if it's the best you can do."

Things have changed since Meyer passed away. Bancroft St. John High School closed in 1989. Students now have the option of attending high school at Algona, Algona Garrigan or North Kossuth. The high school building is now Bancroft's grade school. But the youth baseball program still lives at the Bancroft Memorial Park, Meyer's home away from home all those years. One addition is the V.J. Meyer Memorial scoreboard that watches over the action. The North Kossuth High School team and the Bancroft town team also play there. In the grade school cafeteria is a trophy case that was dedicated to Meyer after he passed away. In that trophy case are a collection of pictures of Meyer, some of his awards and other baseball memorabilia. The Johnnies' baseball trophies are also in the building, a lasting testament to an unforgettable coach.

Mary Meyer is proud of what her husband accomplished. "He inspired the kids, and he encouraged them," she said. "At the same time, he let them know if they did something wrong. He loved to teach." Vince Meyer never dwelled on the past, no matter how sweet the victory or how sour the loss. "After the game, he went on thinking about the next game," Mary Meyer said. But the day finally came when there was not another game to look forward to. And baseball was poorer because of it. "I've always thought that if I could die at the ballpark hitting infield at the age of 104, that would be a pretty good way to go," Meyer said upon retirement.



Madison Central High School, Richmond, Kentucky

Head Coach (from 1959 to 1993) Don Richardson

The older we get the more we tend to embellish the glory days of our sporting youth.

But when Madison Central's 1982 state championship baseball team was honored in Richmond last Friday, there was no need for the players to exaggerate their accomplishments. It's impossible to improve on a 40-0 record and No. 1 national ranking.

Kentucky hasn't had an unbeaten baseball champ since Don Richardson coached Madison Central to those remarkable heights 30 years ago.

The Indians weren't just undefeated; they were largely untested.

They won 40 games by an average score of 11-2. They shut out 13 opponents.

They had a team batting average of .375 and an earned run average of 1.50.

In the region, semi-state and state tournaments, they annihilated seven opponents by a combined score of 80-7. They routed Henderson County 13-2 in the semifinals, and Pleasure Ridge Park 9-0 in the finals.

Ricky Congleton was the ace of that Madison Central staff. He went 10-0 and won the title game on his 18th birthday. Now a couple years shy of turning 50, Congleton reflected on just how good those Indians were.

"We knew we had a special group, a close group," he said. "We took it day to day. We had nine good sticks in the lineup, so I never worried when I pitched. I knew those guys would hit, and I had Greg (Stephens) back there catching."

Stephens and Keith Kidd led the offense. Congleton and Jeff Cruse anchored the pitching staff.

Congleton went on to play at ECU and won three OVC championship rings. "Those mean a lot to me, but I didn't have the kind of relationships I had with the boys I had in high school. There are seven or eight of us who still keep in close contact."

Congleton still keeps up with high school baseball. He thinks it would be harder for a team to go undefeated these days. "There are too many good players spread out everywhere," he said. "Everybody's pretty equal."



Eaton High School, Eaton, Colorado

Head Coach (from 1972 to 2015) Jim Danley

Before the 1998 Class 3A state baseball championship game, Eaton head coach Jim Danley approached leadoff hitter Jason Smith and told him, "You are going to play a key role in today's game." "I am going to swing at the first pitch, coach," Smith replied. "I know he is going to throw a fastball down the pipe." Danley turned to Smith, looked him in the eyes and said, "You do what you have to do," and trotted down the third-base line. Sure enough, the first pitch thrown by Lamar High School's Brad Stiles was a fastball that Smith smoked for a line-drive base hit.

Eaton beat Lamar 3-1 that day, giving the Reds their third state championship. "That's why Coach Danley has been so successful. He believes in his players and he just lets them play their game," said Smith, who became an all-conference outfielder for the University of Northern Colorado. Smith now works at The Ridge at Castle Pines North as a golf assistant.

Ten years later, on May 17, Eaton faced Lamar again in the Class 3A title game, defeating the Savages 4-1 for another Danley achievement. Senior starting pitcher Kyle Ottoson, who will be attending South Mountain Community College in Phoenix in the fall, struck out 15 Savage batters. He pointed to Danley for his success. "Throughout four years of high school, he has changed me completely, making me into the ballplayer that I am today. He is a tremendous coach and that's all you can say," Ottoson said.

In a career that spans more than 36 years, Danley has willed himself to accomplish just about as much as a high school baseball coach can accomplish.

"In school we work with kids' minds. The mind can think and the mind can judge, but the third thing that the mind can do is to will, and I think that is something that we don't pay much attention to in modern-day society," Danley said. "You can find no successful people who didn't get there without the ability to will their way through the tough times."

Going into this season, Danley had a winning percentage of 91 percent over the last 10 years, and a winning percentage of 80 percent for his career. Even more impressive, he has led Eaton to 26 consecutive state tournament appearances, winning eight state championship titles. And in January, Danley was inducted into the Colorado High School Activities Association Hall of Fame, adding to a résumé filled with awards and honors.

Danley found his passion for baseball at a young age. "We moved in from the farm to Greeley when I was 8 years old and at that time there were really just two to three major activities," Danley said. "What you did was trade baseball cards in the morning and at noon you played baseball until it was time to go home. I learned to love the game at that point."

The storied coach points to his father, Gilbert, as a source of inspiration: "My dad had always gone to great lengths to show me how to play the game properly. Back in those days, each town had its own team and in the town of Gill, Colorado, they had some great Mexican baseball players. My dad asked them to show me how to throw and how to hit. Those Mexican players and the town of Gill and those families got me into loving baseball."

Eaton Athletic Director Steve Longwell said Danley is simply an outstanding individual. "It's not about just baseball with Jim," Longwell said, "it's about how he teaches the kids to approach life."

Former Eaton third basemen Mike Carrasco agreed: "He was more than my neighbor; he taught us more about life than about baseball," Carrasco said.

Like Smith, Carrasco played for Danley during the school's state record run of 45 consecutive wins from 1998-99.

Danley remembers the streak vividly and how it began: "The year before, we lost to Kent Denver 17-6 and I remember Smith, Jeff Meyers and Carrasco after the game with tears in their eyes and I remember them coming up to me and saying, 'Coach, this is not going to happen again.' "Who knew what that could have meant at the time, but from that moment on, they never played a game where they were not focused and mentally prepared."

Carrasco remembers during the streak that the team played with great confidence. "If you have a coach who is all over you, you don't have much confidence. Coach Danley just let us play. He knew when to stop and he knew when to redirect us," Carrasco said.

Danley said baseball is comprised of singular moments, and when individuals and teams believe in themselves, they can accomplish anything. "We played superior teams during the streak and we fell behind and came back several times," Danley said, "but those kids imposed their will on their opponents and they simply would not go away."

Is there another streak in his future? Danley shows no sign of stopping. "As long as I'm getting up every morning and my first thought is about baseball, I will still be here. I guess I haven't changed from about the age of 4 years old," Danley said. Danley said life on the diamond can prepare kids for anything. "I can't think of any better preparation for the rough and tumble capitalistic world we live in than athletics and in my case baseball," Danley said. "It is a great vehicle for life's lessons."



Asher High School, Asher, Oklahoma

Head Coach (from 1960 to 1998) Murl Bowen

Pardon a city dweller's observation, but there is not much about Asher that would make anyone want to live here. Except for a new post office and City Hall, downtown Asher is either decaying or nonexistent. Only scattered evidence of a once-busy main street remains. One can't help thinking that it looks like a bomb was dropped on this town. But if the truth be known, the only bomb to hit this place was a tiny white sphere with red stitches. A handful of new families move to Asher every year for one specific reason high school baseball.

The lure of this small community about 70 miles southeast of Oklahoma City understandably irks coaches at other high schools who watch their best players drawn to Asher like spring bugs to bright lights. Some coaches claim trying to beat Asher is like trying to beat an all-star team and most years they are not too far from wrong, since the Indians often have the best players from several other towns.

But why Asher? What is this town's baseball mystique? Is it something in the water? Asher residents probably prefer to think it is something in the sand that's filled by the sweat their players leave on the infield. The pride of Asher is the only flat piece of ground within a couple of miles of the intersection of U.S. 177 and SH 39. It is known as Bowen Field. As an overhead sign proclaims, it is the "Home of the Indians, State Champions."

Bowen became the first Oklahoma high school coach and probably the first in the nation to claim his 1,000th career victory this spring. And if the truth be known, the victory total could have been much higher. "If we had only played Class B schools, we could have had another 150 or 200 wins," Bowen said. "But I'm not in it for the record. We schedule games against Lawton, Western Heights and Norman. You only get good by playing the best."

"We think it's an honor to play 3A and 4A schools because they've got nothing to gain by beating us." Louisiana's best prep baseball player moved to Asher a few years ago. So did a youngster who had been named a Texas blue chip football prospect at quarterback as a junior. The reason they came here is simple. "There's not much else to do in Asher except play baseball," Bowen said. "There are no jobs for the kids and nothing else, so they might as well be playing baseball."

"If any lad works hard, I'll give him a suit," Bowen said. Bowen doesn't demand perfection from his youngsters. In high school baseball where a good batter fails three out of every five times at the plate, that would be unreasonable. But he does expect certain things from his four seniors, three juniors, three sophomores and five freshmen. "My players have to stay away from dope; they have to have their hair cut; they can't smoke; and they have to be home at 10:30 at night. "Those are my rules. If they get out of line, I usually find out."

Fathers, serious about their sons' baseball, appreciate Bowen's workmanlike approach to the game. That is why five players on this year's Asher team are move-ins. Two of the new families live in a mobile home park while three more rent homes. The fact they moved to Asher angers some, but Bowen said he can't be blamed. "I'd like to go out as decent coach and a nice guy," he said. "What I wouldn't like to do is go out being known as the best recruiter the state's ever had." Youngsters do move into the Asher school district, and some of them do so expressly with the thought of playing baseball in mind. "I don't deny boys move in," Bowen said. "I've never denied that. But I do deny we have ever recruited anyone. Recruiting is when you ask them to move or give them something to move. We don't have anything to give."

"All I can promise to anyone is that if they play at Asher, they'll get a suit and get to play on a good field with good equipment," he said. "I can't ever promise that a kid will get a scholarship if he plays here."

However, the chances are good a player will get a scholarship if he plays at Asher. Between 50 percent and 75 percent of Asher baseball seniors receive college scholarships.

There are now 10 former Asher players in the college ranks: two at the University of Texas, two at Southeastern, two at Seminole Junior College, two at Emporia (Kan.) State, one at Murray State and one at East Central.

The community is proud of its baseball heritage, but seems less excited with every new trophy the school brings home. "We don't get the crowds we used to get," Bowen said. "I think we've won so much, everybody takes us for granted. Maybe it's just that some people can't afford the gas to go to the games now or the money to get in. But I think it's probably that everybody just takes us in stride." Bowen emphasized that the many trophies belong to the players who carried them off the field. "We're not out here to win something for the community or even for the school," he said. "We're here to win something for the kids."

For about 85 games a year, Asher players play strict, disciplined baseball all over the state.

Bowen believes his businesslike approach to the game is why his players win and also why other youngsters flock to Asher to join his team. The Asher coach figures he never will be able to convince some other coaches to stop branding him as a recruiter. "I guess they want us to put up a sign at the edge of town saying you're welcome to move here unless you're a ballplayer. But I can't control who moves in and out of this town. If you want to move to Asher, that's your business."



LaPorte High School, La Porte, Indiana
Head Coach (from 1960 to 1998) Ken Schreiber

Slicer baseball, the kind with the Schreiber thumbprint, never goes out of style.

Fundamentals bridge the generation gap, no matter the level. Little things that impact the big picture are as important today as they were in the '80s, the heyday of legendary LaPorte High baseball coach Ken Schreiber.

Maybe it's the lack of "zing" in college baseball's bats this season. Maybe it's the influence of a sound offense and defense: Bunt; move the runner; hit the cut-off man. Maybe it's a coincidence.

Whatever the case, Slicer baseball is enjoying a banner year...on the collegiate level.

Ken, who retired more than a decade ago, still has an influence on the game. That's because his sons, Doug and Keith, are disciples who aren't shy about preaching his principles.

Doug, 47, is in his 13th season as the head baseball coach at Purdue. His Boilermakers are 30-13, 10-5 in the Big Ten — tied for the league lead with Michigan State. A critical weekend series with the Spartans awaits. At the end of the rainbow is a run for the Boilers' first NCAA tourney opportunity since 1987.

Keith, 39, is in his fifth year as the baseball boss at Glen Oaks Community College in Centreville, Mich. The Vikings are 24-12, 21-6 in the Michigan Community College Athletic Association. They lead the conference by 1½ games with seven to play.

In other words, it's a good time to be a Schreiber.

"One of the biggest lessons we learned from our dad was that the program comes first, all the individuals come second," Keith said.

Sounds like something Ken would say. Don't let injuries get in the way. Position changes? Just part of the game. Team first.

"At the college level, first you have to bring in the physical talent," Ken said, "then hope the team has the right mental approach."

Sounds easy enough: Chemistry 101.

Ken had his college opportunities. The culture dissuaded him.

"I never wanted to beg anyone to play for me," he said, referring to recruiting.

In LaPorte, all little boys grew up wanting to be Slicers.

In years past, big-boppers, waving "live" war sticks, changed the college game. Singles hitters transformed into home run threats with the zipped-up bats. New parameters on the makeup of the metal bats made the game more honest.

"The way guys were hitting homers (in past years), it wasn't baseball," Doug said. "It was more like slow-pitch softball or whiffle ball. This year, you're seeing more doubles and triples."

"The switch (to deaden the bats) favored us," Keith said. "We never had a lot of home run hitters and we've got a big ballpark. The new bat standards were a change for the good. There's more emphasis on the little things, the way we used to play at LaPorte. A 3-1 game? LaPorte always won those."

Ken isn't surprised to see his sons having success. Energy. Passion. Pride. They played the game his way.

"The games I've watched them coach, the strategy followed my script a little," Ken said. "But they're more in control, not nearly as excited as I was. They're much nicer than me. My wife would always hear fans complaining about that (jerk coaching) at third base. I sit in the stands and don't hear that about Doug or Keith."

"When my dad raised his voice, you had to have the maturity to understand he expects more out of you," Doug said. "It's like (former Indiana University basketball coach) Bobby Knight. If he were coaching now, (his style) might not work."

"You're talking about a one-of-a-kind individual," Keith said of his dad. "There's a laid-back side to Doug and me. We share our dad's intensity, but there aren't a lot of Ken Schreibers walking around."

Maybe not. But there are a couple apples who haven't fallen far from the tree.